

THE BENTON COUNTY
DAILY RECORD ROGERS
EDITION

Lincoln, Pryor meet with president on Iraq

By Gary Lookadoo Staff Writer // garyl@nwanews.com

Posted on Sunday, January 7, 2007

URL: <http://www.nwanews.com/brog/News/43188/>

BENTON COUNTY — Arkansas' two U. S. senators — Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor — were among a group of 15 lawmakers who gave President Bush their input on Iraq strategy in a White House Cabinet Room meeting Friday.

Democrats claimed majority status in both the House and the Senate this week. It is the first time in a dozen years that Democrats have controlled both the House and Senate.

At the White House, the president considered a new direction in the war in Iraq, and invited Lincoln, Pryor and some other senators to an afternoon meeting on the subject.

Lincoln repeated to the president her longtime stand against an "open-ended commitment" of U. S. troops in Iraq, she said after the meeting.

"I also tried to emphasize that before I could support any increase in the number of troops in Iraq, the president has to demonstrate to us that doing so would really directly be tied to a plan with a purpose, a very detailed purpose, a purposeful plan, with the redeployment of troops at a date certain, down the road," she said.

"Much of the questions were centered around that issue: How do we know what those troops would do and how we could accomplish (that)? Basically, if we're providing the backup for the Iraqis, how do we know when we get to that point?" Lincoln asked.

It's clear that "the burden of proof" that the new strategy is correct is squarely on the president, Pryor said.

"I told the president that when I tuck my kids in at night, we pray for the president because we understand he has the weight of the world on his shoulders. But at this point, I think that what I hope for is that he will listen, and he will weigh what he heard today in that meeting," Pryor said.

"What he was hearing was a lot of what I'm hearing in Arkansas. People want to win in Iraq. They want to see a good result there. But they have a lot of anxiety about how Iraq has gone — some of the faulty assumptions, some of the mistakes that have been made. And they're looking for the best next step. And I told the president I feel like, right now, he has the burden of proof: He has to show the American people what we should do next, and he also has to make his case with Congress to show that what we do next makes sense."

Copyright © 2001-2007 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, Inc. All rights reserved.

Contact: webmaster@nwanews.com